



Closed health center fails to get grant

South Central Community had pinned hopes to reopen on getting money



Closed: health center fails to get grant. (File photo)

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

A nonprofit health center that was forced to shut its doors last month, and then evicted from its rental space, was passed over for additional grant funding from a federal

agency.

South Central Community Health Center in Raeford closed last month. Staff shut the doors after not receiving their paychecks, a former employee told The News-Journal at the time. The Hoke County Sheriff's Office later

confirmed that a deputy also served a summary ejection notice that ordered the health center to move out of its rental space on Southern Avenue.

Chief Executive Officer Delvin McAllister said last month he was waiting on the results of a possible grant re-

newal that could allow the center to continue operating. The three-year grant was up this year and grantees had to go through a competitive process for seeking additional operating funds, McAllister said.

However, that particular (See GRANT, page 4)

Two charged in dramatic drug bust

The Hoke County Sheriff's Office, United States Homeland Security and the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation collaborated on a drug bust Tuesday, seizing over half a kilo of heroin with a street value of more than \$30,000. The arrest was made on Main Street.

Investigators intercepted and apprehended two suspects wanted in connection with the drug bust, according to Hoke County Sheriff Hubert Peterkin. Authorities

(See DRUG BUST, page 4)

No bedbug infestation at school

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

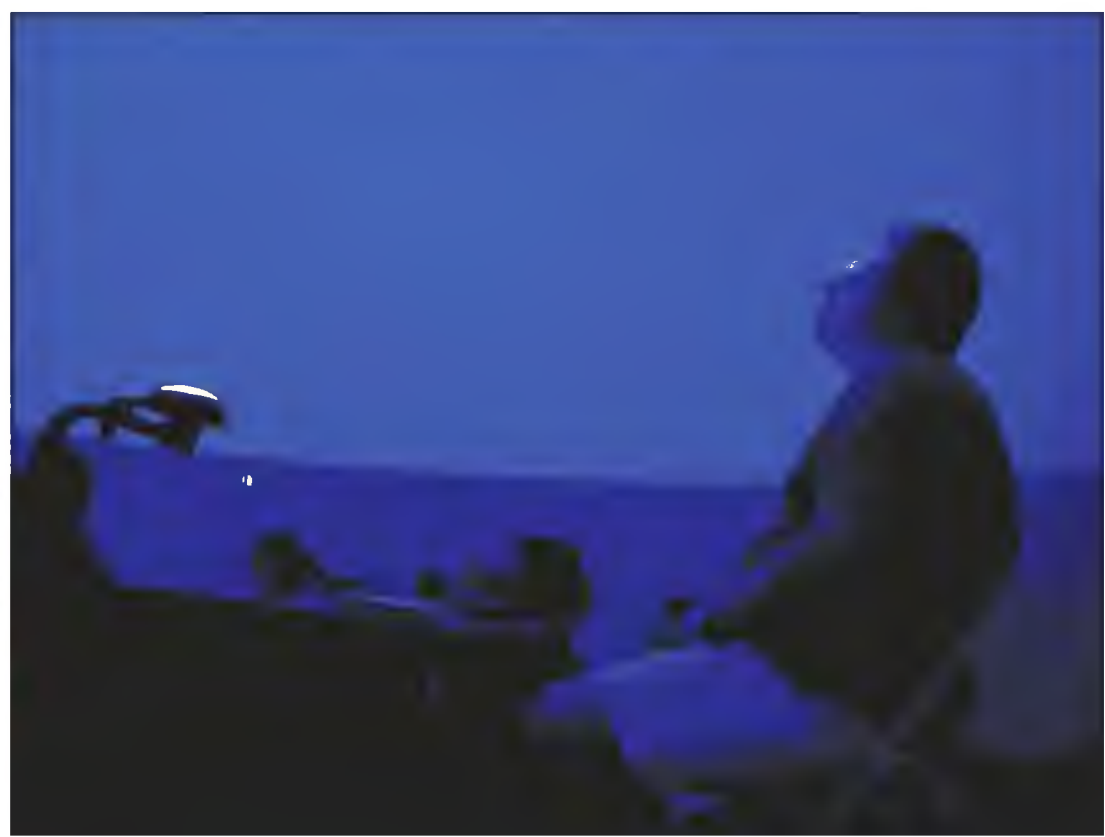
Panicked parents flooded social media in recent weeks spreading rumors about bedbugs at Sandy Grove Middle School, but Student Support Services Executive Director Dr. Peggy Owens said the school has found only one confirmed bedbug.

"We had some parents saying that

(See BEDBUGS, page 10)



Nick Eakes talks to kids before they enter the mobile planetarium last week. All students at Don Steed Elementary School got a chance to see the stars inside, right. (Catharin Shepard photos)



'Is this heaven?'

Children awed by visit from Moorehead mobile planetarium

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

"Is this heaven?" a child whispered in awe, peering up at the trillions of tiny white specks of stars displayed on the blue dome overhead.

In the dark space inside the inflated dome, even quiet whispers echoed loudly.

"What we have to do is speed up the rotation of the earth... usually in the real world we have to wait second by second, but in here we can speed it up," astronomer Nick Eakes said. He hit a key on his laptop and the image in the dome changed as stars whirled past.

"Whooooaaa," the group of fourth-graders exclaimed as the

moon appeared over the horizon and zoomed high.

"This is what the sky would look like overhead here in Hoke County if there were no clouds and there were no extra lights from all our cities and towns," Eakes explained.

Pointing out the features of the night sky and several constellations was just the first of

many astronomy lessons last week for students at Don Steed Elementary School. The Moorehead Planetarium and Science Center's mobile planetarium visited the school for a few days thanks to the school's parent-teacher organization, and a spearheaded effort by teacher of the year Marian Elliot.

(See PLANETARIUM, page 5)

Hoke's school dropout rate lower than state average

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

In the last 10 years the Hoke County Schools dropout rate has decreased from 7.65 percent in 2007 to lower than the state average.

A total of 48 students in grades 7-12 dropped out of school in the 2017-18 school year, setting Hoke County's current dropout rate at

1.89 percent. That's lower than in neighboring Cumberland, Robeson, Sampson and Richmond county schools, and below the state dropout rate of 2.18 percent.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction collected and published the data. Student Support Services Executive Director Dr. Peggy Owens shared the report with Hoke County Board of Education members last week.

The 2017-18 data is the most current information available, as the 2018-19 school year is still in progress.

In a sampling of benchmark schools, Hoke had the fourth lowest dropout rate. Only Moore, Scotland and Columbus counties had lower dropout rates among the group of benchmark school systems. Other school systems in Bladen, Harnett, Brunswick,

Person, Duplin and Anson counties had higher dropout rates than Hoke.

The State Board of Education defines a "dropout" as any student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or completion of a program of study without transferring to another elementary or secondary school.

In the 2017-18 school year 38 Hoke High students, nine Turling-

ton Alternative School students and one SandHoke Early College student dropped out. That number includes 19 freshmen, 12 sophomores, 12 juniors and four seniors; and one eighth grade student at Turlington Alternative School.

The state also tracks demographic data of school dropouts. Of the 48 students who dropped (See DROPOUT, page 4)

OTHER STUFF

By KEN MACDONALD

One thing that's proved enjoyable about this job is tooling around in the archive looking for interesting stories from Hoke County's past.

In the old days—say, 75 years ago—the storytelling in newspapers was better than nowadays, when we're taught to stick to a rather objective and structured but blah style. And nobody seemed to keep information from reporters.

Politicians often laid their cards (See OTHER STUFF, page 5)

For officer, it was a close call

Story recalled at officer remembrance service

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Raeford Police Chief Marc Godwin still recalls a night many years ago when he could have lost his life in the line of duty, and another officer nearly did.

While he and other law enforcement officers were out on a call, a man started shooting at them. They took cover behind their vehicles,

but one officer didn't manage to get there in time. Godwin recalled spotting his fellow police officer lying on the ground.

"He was white as a sheet. He had been shot," Godwin said.

The officer survived, but the shooting change his life forever, Godwin said.

Life-threatening situations like that can make law enforcement (See REMEMBRANCE, page 10)



Godwin recalls close call. (Ken MacDonald photo)

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